

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) An equipment management apparatus for transmitting management information collected from a plurality of equipment to a centralized management apparatus, comprising:

a detector for detecting a trouble which has occurred in a first image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet; and

a transmission controller for, when the trouble is detected by the detector, transmitting management information about a second image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet, in which the trouble has not occurred and which is independent from the first image forming apparatus, together with the trouble information about the first image forming apparatus to the centralized management apparatus.

2. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transmission controller responds to the detection of the trouble by the detector, and obtains the management information from the second image forming apparatus.

3. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transmission controller transmits management information about a plurality of equipment including the second image forming apparatus.

4. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising a selector for selecting the second image forming apparatus among the plurality of equipment based on a specified condition.

5. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus for transmitting management information collected from a plurality of equipment to a centralized management apparatus, comprising:

a detector for detecting a trouble which has occurred in first equipment;

a transmission controller for, when the trouble is detected by the detector, transmitting management information about second equipment which is other than the first equipment together with the trouble information about the first equipment to the centralized management apparatus; and

a selector for selecting the second equipment among the plurality of equipment based on a specified condition, wherein the specified condition is a period until the time for the next regular maintenance for each equipment comes, and the selector selects as second equipment the equipment whose time for the next regular maintenance is scheduled earlier than the times for the next regular maintenance for any other equipment.

6. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the specified condition is characteristics of each of the equipment, and the selector selects the second image forming apparatus based on the characteristics of each of the equipment.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a selector for selecting the second image forming apparatus among a plurality of equipment, based on at least one of the type of color of the second image forming apparatus, the speed of image formation thereof, and the equipment structure thereof.

9. (Original) An equipment management apparatus for transmitting management information collected from a plurality of equipment to a centralized management apparatus, comprising:

a first judging device for judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting information about first equipment;

a second judging device for judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting information about second equipment;

a priority determining controller for determining the order of priorities of the first and second equipment, based on the characteristics of each of the equipment;
and

a transmission controller for transmitting the information about the first and second equipment to the centralized management apparatus, in accordance with the order of priorities determined by the priority determining controller, when the first judging device judges that it is the time of transmitting the information about the first equipment, and the second judging device judges that it is the time of transmitting the information about the second equipment.

10. (Original) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the equipment is an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet.

11. (Original) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the priority determining controller determines an order of priorities based on at least one of the type of color of the image forming apparatus, the speed of image formation thereof, and the apparatus structure thereof.

12. (Currently Amended) An equipment management system including an equipment management apparatus for transmitting management information collected from a plurality of equipment, and a centralized management apparatus for managing each of the plurality of equipment based on the management information transmitted from the equipment management apparatus,

wherein the equipment management apparatus comprises:

a detector for detecting a trouble which has occurred in a first image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet; and

a transmission controller for, when the trouble is detected by the detector, transmitting management information about a second image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet, in which the trouble has not occurred and which is independent from the first image forming apparatus, together with the trouble information about the first image forming apparatus to the centralized management apparatus are.

13. (Original) An equipment management system including an equipment management apparatus for transmitting management information collected from a plurality of equipment, and a centralized management apparatus for managing each of the plurality of equipment based on the management information transmitted from the equipment management apparatus,

wherein the equipment management apparatus comprises:

a first judging device for judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting information about first equipment;

a second judging device for judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting the information about second equipment;

a priority determining controller for determining an order of priorities of the first and second equipment, based on a characteristic of each of the equipment; and

a transmission controller for transmitting the information about the first and second equipment to the centralized management apparatus, in accordance with the order of priorities determined by the priority determining controller, when the first judging device judges that it is the time of transmitting the information about the first

equipment, and the second judging device judges that it is the time of transmitting the information about the second equipment.

14. (Currently Amended) An equipment management method in which one equipment management apparatus collects management information about a plurality of equipment, and the equipment management apparatus transmits the management information to a centralized management apparatus so as to manage the plurality of equipment, comprising steps of:

a step 1 of detecting a trouble which has occurred in a first image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet, by use of the equipment management apparatus; and

a step 2 of transmitting management information about a second image forming apparatus, in which the trouble has not occurred and which is independent from the first image forming apparatus, from the equipment management apparatus to the centralized management apparatus together with the trouble information about the first image forming apparatus, when the trouble is detected in the step 1.

15. (Original) An equipment management method in which one equipment management apparatus collects management information about a plurality of equipment, and the equipment management apparatus transmits the management information to a centralized management apparatus so as to manage the plurality of equipment, comprising steps of:

a step of judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting information about first equipment from the equipment management apparatus;

a step of judging whether or not it is the time of transmitting the information about second equipment from the equipment management apparatus; and

a step of transmitting the information about the first and second equipment from the equipment management apparatus to the centralized management apparatus, in accordance with the order of priorities based on the characteristics of each of the equipment, when it is judged that it is the time of transmitting the information about the first equipment, and it is judged that it is the time of transmitting the information about the second equipment.

16. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the equipment management apparatus is independently connected to the first image forming apparatus and the second image forming apparatus.

17. (Previously Presented) An equipment management apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the equipment management apparatus is independently connected to the first image forming apparatus and the second image forming apparatus.

18. (Previously Presented) An equipment management method according to claim 14, wherein the equipment management apparatus is independently connected to the first image forming apparatus and the second image forming apparatus.